



## E-NEWS from *Congresswoman Jennifer Dunn*

**An electronic legislative update for May 21, 2002**

### **Did you Know...**

- Women are more likely than men to leave assets to their heirs.
- Women are starting businesses at twice the rate as men and they disproportionately rely on personal savings to finance the start-up costs of their businesses. Often the personal savings come from inheritance.
- Permanent repeal of the death tax would help many women realize their dream of starting a business and passing it along their children.
- Jennifer recently commemorated the one year anniversary of House passage of "The Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001" that included repeal of the death tax. But a Senate rule prevented tax cuts from being permanent, so Jennifer is working to make last year's repeal of the death tax permanent.



*On May 16, Jennifer joined Majority Leader Dick Armey and House Republican Conference Chairman JC Watts to commemorate one year since the House passage of the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001.*

## **What is going on this week?**

### **HOUSE PASSES BILL TO INCREASE VETERANS DISABILITY BENEFITS**

Earlier this week, the US House approved the "Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2002." Effective December 1, 2002, the bill provides for a cost-of-living adjustment for disabled veterans with service-connected disabilities and to dependents and survivors who qualify for benefits. It also increases the Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance coverage from \$90,000 to \$150,000.

### **HOUSE PASSES BILL TO ACCELERATE MARRIAGE PENALTY RELIEF**

With Congresswoman Jennifer Dunn's support, the US House has passed a bill that accelerates by two years the date that the marriage penalty tax is reduced. Specifically, last year's tax cut bill calls for a gradual reduction beginning in 2005. This bill would make the tax reduction effective by increasing the standard deduction for married couples in 2003.

## **US HOUSE SCHEDULED TO CONSIDER NATIONAL SECURITY EMERGENCY SPENDING BILL**

The US House is expected to consider a \$29.4 billion emergency spending bill to supplement dollars allotted last year for national security. The majority of the funds, \$15.77 billion, would be appropriated to the Department of Defense for ongoing military operational costs, personnel and equipment, coalition support and intelligence and other classified activities. The remaining dollars would be spent on the new Transportation Security Administration (to oversee airline safety), the Department of Energy for security of nuclear facilities and the Department of Justice for counter terrorism efforts. In addition, the bill will provide assistance to New York for the families of September 11 victims and \$1 billion to make up for shortfalls in the Department of Education's Pell Grant program for college students.

## **US HOUSE APPROVES AFGHANISTAN FREEDOM SUPPORT ACT OF 2002**

The US House approved HR 3994, a bill to promote the reconstruction of an independent, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan. (Jennifer voted in support of the bill) It authorizes \$200 million in fiscal year 2002, \$300 million in fiscal year 2003 and \$250 million in 2004 and 2005 for a broad range of development and economic security assistance for Afghanistan. The dollars will also support humanitarian assistance such as food and medicine and aims to reduce supply and demand for narcotics

---

## **What we did last week.**

### **BILL TO ENHANCE SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS FOR WIDOWS, DISABLED INDIVIDUALS PASSES US HOUSE**

A bill, co-sponsored by Congresswoman Dunn, to expand Social Security benefits for widows and widowers, passed the House last week. The "Social Security Benefit Enhancements for Women Act of 2002" will benefit over 120,000 elderly and disabled widows and divorced spouses who are among the most likely to live in poverty. This bill will increase the unfair benefit limit on widows whose spouses both retire and die before the full retirement age. Under Social Security, a person gets a reduced benefit if they retire early. If the husband dies, the widow is forced to live alone on very little money. It will also eliminate a needless two-year waiting period for some divorced spouses to receive benefits and it will update eligibility requirements for disabled widows to ensure consistency with earnings requirements in current law.

## **US HOUSE TO APPROVED WELFARE REFORM REAUTHORIZATION, INCLUDING \$2 BILLION ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR CHILD CARE**

The "Personal Responsibility, Work and Family Protection Act," also known as the welfare reform reauthorization legislation was approved by the US House last week. The bill reauthorizes the 1996 reform act which is considered to be one of the most successful social policy changes of recent history. The 1996 reform changed welfare from a program that encourages permanent dependence to one that enables families to find jobs and become financially self-sufficient. (Since 1996, the number of individuals on cash assistance has dropped nationally by 56 percent.) As a Member of the Welfare Reform Subcommittee of Ways and Means, Jennifer was directly involved in writing the 1996 bill and has continued her involvement with the issue throughout the years.

Among other provisions, Jennifer helped secure an additional \$2 billion in the bill to better meet the child care needs of families on welfare. This is particularly important because welfare mothers often hold evening or weekend jobs when child care is less accessible and more expensive. The bill increases from 30 to 40 the number of hours a welfare recipient must work. Of the 40 hour work requirement, 16 hours can be spent on educational endeavors. It provides more flexibility to states to administer various public assistance programs, it provides more time for recipients to participate in drug or alcohol rehabilitation and job training, and it allows special accommodations for parents of children who have special needs.

## **PIPELINE SAFETY BILL EXPECTED TO INCLUDE PROVISIONS OF DUNN-LARSON PROPOSAL**

The House Transportation Committee is expected to consider a bill to strengthen pipeline safety regulations. The bill is sponsored by Committee Chairman Don Young (R-AK) and is expected to include some provisions of a separate pipeline safety bill authored by Congresswoman Jennifer Dunn and her Washington State colleague, Rick Larsen. The legislation would require the Secretary of Transportation to develop a plan to monitor and test the safety of natural gas pipelines on a regular basis, require pipeline employees to meet stronger qualifications and require the operators to work with states to develop emergency preparedness plans. The Dunn-Larsen provisions will increase state oversight of pipelines, require that operators appoint a liaison to communicate with state and local officials and give local communities more access to information regarding pipeline safety. The bill will also require new, mandatory testing of natural gas pipelines. The provision only addresses gas lines since the US Department of Transportation has enacted a separate requirement that liquid pipelines, such as the one operated by Olympic that exploded in Bellingham, be tested every five years.

# Summary of Press Releases

## HOUSE PANEL PASSES PIPELINE SAFETY BILL THAT INCLUDES PROVISIONS FROM DUNN-LARSON LEGISLATION

The House Transportation subcommittee approved a pipeline safety bill sponsored by the committee's Chairman, Don Young (R-AK). Included in the bill are several provisions from a separate measure co-authored by Congresswoman Jennifer Dunn and Congressman Rick Larsen. Congresswoman Dunn worked closely with Chairman Young to include in the legislation the Dunn-Larsen provisions which will require pipeline operators to be more accountable.

*"The tragic loss of young life resulting from the Bellingham explosion will forever live in the memories of Washingtonians. It is our responsibility to do what we can to ensure that a similar tragedy never happens again. Unfortunately, the Bellingham tragedy is not an isolated incident in the United States. So it is clear that we need a better system for ensuring that the pipelines running near our communities are safe. No bill is perfect, but Chairman Young's bill is the result of thoughtful work and will significantly improve pipeline safety," said Congresswoman Dunn.*

## REPUBLICAN WOMEN MEMBERS OF CONGRESS SECURE \$2 BILLION FOR CHILD CARE

A group of Republican Women Members of Congress announced that they were successful in securing an additional \$2 billion dollars in funding for Child Care Block Grants to states. Judy Biggert (R-IL), Jennifer Dunn (R-WA), Melissa Hart (R-PA), Nancy Johnson (R-CT), Sue Kelly (R-NY), Deborah Pryce (R-OH), Marge Roukema (R-NJ), and Heather Wilson (R-NM) joined together to push for the funding to be included in the Welfare Reform bill, HR 4700, under consideration by the House of Representatives. This block grant provides child care subsidies to low-income families with children under 13. It is the primary source of federal child care assistance to low-income families. The block grant will be distributed to states as a five year investment of \$400 million per year.

"I am proud of the welfare reform reauthorization bill we will be bringing to the floor," said **Jennifer Dunn**. "The thoughtful work of my Republican women colleagues to add an additional \$2 billion for child care will help more women deal with the tough challenge of handling a job while supporting their children. Often times, women on welfare find weekend or evening jobs when it is harder to find daycare. Evening and weekend day care is expensive, but it is imperative to help women move from welfare to financial self-sufficiency."